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State Dept. review completed

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NSC BRIEFING

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28 September 1955

SOUTHEAST ASIA

State Dept. review completed

I In Vietnam the Viet Minh are increasing pressure on Dien for election consultations

A Have formally requested Britain and USSR (as Geneva co-chairmen) plus Indian chairman of International Control Commission, to insure implementation Geneva Agreement.

B Viets have proposed settlement calling for nationally elected parliament which would appoint coalition government.

1. However both north and south zones would retain considerable autonomy, have separate regional assemblies

2. Plan obviously designed to reassure southerners.

C In a related move, Viet Minh announced cabinet "changes" 20 Sep

1. Pham Van Dong took Ho Chi Minh's second hat (premiership), while Ho remains president and head of Party

2. This allows Ho to stand above and apart from Viet government -- enhancing his symbolic value

II Viet Minh harassment US Consulate Hanoi has now resulted in cut-off radio communications.

A Embassy Saigon last heard from Hanoi on 24 Sep.

B Earlier, Viet Minh had made consul appear before examining board for driver's license

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1. Businessmen made patriotic speeches, threatened trial by "people's court" for traffic violations.
2. Finally informed consul he had failed examination.

III. In south, Diem continues refuse consultation with Viet Minh.

- A. Diem planning referendum on Bao Dai in late October, constitutional convention in November, elections for national assembly in December.



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- C. Meanwhile pressure on Diem's government has included Viet Minh organized demonstrations for unification.

1. Diem's troops have been forced to fire on three separate demonstrations this month.

IV. In Cambodia, saxophone-playing ex king Sihanouk following his party's clean sweep of 11 Sep elections has agreed to become prime minister.

- A. Heretofore he has preferred less exposed role; willingness assume premiership reflects self confidence.

- B. Told US Ambassador he not as crazy as people supposed: "I may be eccentric but there is method to my eccentricity."

V. In winning all 91 seats for new parliament, Sihanouk's newly organized "movement", the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (SRN) was embarrassingly successful.

- A. Ex king's popularity in countryside undoubtedly great but intimidation by government officials contributed to lopsided

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B. Once powerful Democratic Party which includes nearly all educated Cambodians, got less than 25% of vote; Communists polled less than 4% of total vote.

C. However, if educated elite are excluded from political role, some may make common cause with Communists.

VI. Cambodian foreign policy will remain vaguely neutralist but Sihanouk and advisors recognize dependence on West -- particularly US.

A. Vote by SRN party congress (25 Sep) to leave French Union is logical step in Cambodia's assertion complete independence.

B. Move has long been sought by Cambodians, but action at this time reflects Sihanouk's long-standing grudge over past high-handed French treatment.

VII. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, a Burmese military mission, led by Commander-in-Chief General Ne Win left Rangoon for Communist China on 23 Sep.

A. Considerable speculation that Chi Coms will try impress Burmese with their military might, offer Burma military equipment.

B. Premier Nu has stated categorically, however, that the mission would not conclude any secret agreements and would purchase no arms.

VIII. Meanwhile, today (29 Sep) is Indonesia's first national election day.

A. After many doubts, voting will take place in all but areas of extreme unrest.

B. However, results of election will not be known for about a month.

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- C. Leaders of pro-Western Masjumi (Moslem) Party, which heads present govt., are confident of victory.
1. Probable that Masjumi will win at least a plurality and form post-election government with support of small parties.
 2. Masjumi victory would mean continued development moderate foreign policy, increasingly friendly toward West (particularly US).
- D. US observers expect Communists -- who are campaigning vigorously -- to make good showing.
1. Some expect Communists to emerge as Indonesia's second largest party, polling as much as 20% of the vote.

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